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**Designation Report for
Old St. Mark AME Church
Landmark Building / Site (LBS)**

In Accordance with Section 16-20.005(d) of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances

Street Address: 491 James P. Brawley Drive NW
(aka 762 Cameron M Alexander Boulevard, NW)

Application Number: N-22-175 / D-22-175

Proposed Category of Designation: Landmark Building/Site (LBS) - Exterior

Zoning Category(ies) at Time of Designation: Special Public Interest (SPI) 3,
Subarea 4

District: 14 **Land Lot:** 111 **County:** Fulton

Designation Report Sections:

1. Eligibility Criteria
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3. Neighborhood Context and History
4. Physical Description of the Property
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Except as noted below, Sections #1 - #7 and #9 - #13 of this Designation Report are based on, incorporate the research completed by, contain documents compiled by, and include text prepared by Landmark Preservation LLC in conjunction with the Atlanta Preservation Center and shall be considered part of the Director's "research" as required in Section 16-20.005(d) for the preparation of a Designation Report for a proposed nomination.

1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

As more fully described in this Designation Report, the Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) meets the following criteria for a Landmark Building / Site (LBS), as defined in Section 16-20.004(b)(2)(a):

Group I - Historic Significance:

Three (3) total criteria - if qualifying under this group alone, at least one (1) criterion must be met. Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) meets (2) criteria:

- (2) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) **is associated with an extremely important historical trend of national, state and local significance.** Old St. Mark AME Church is representative of the shifting racial patterns, otherwise known as "White Flight," that took place throughout the country, and more specifically within the Atlanta neighborhoods of English Avenue and Vine City. This trend is significant locally as it changed the neighborhood racial make-up from being a majority working class white neighborhood to a majority working class African-American neighborhood, as well as the ownership of the church.
- (3) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) **is associated with important cultural patterns** as it was a place of worship utilized by those of different religions and races as well as social, economic and cultural backgrounds. The property was originally the site of Western Heights Baptist Church, an arm of the First Baptist Church and an all-white congregation, which started worshipping in a wood frame building in 1904. That wood frame building was replaced with the existing stone structure and opened in 1920.

After the first Old St. Mark AME Church (also within the English Avenue neighborhood and located at 33 Chestnut Street (now James P. Brawley Drive)) was destroyed by fire on July 3, 1948, the African-American congregation marched to their new house of worship at 491 Chestnut Street (now James P. Brawley Drive) on October 3rd, 1948 – the subject property. After moving to Brawley and Alexander, Old St. Mark AME Church became one of the largest African-American Methodist Episcopal churches in Atlanta (according to the church's own history) and hosted several large gatherings for the community such as the Atlanta-North Georgia Annual Conferences and midterm graduations for Booker T. Washington High School, which was the first public high school for African-Americans in the state of Georgia.

As an education-focused church, midterm graduations took place for students who had finished graduation requirements early or were ready to pursue college and jobs earlier. Fundraisers such as the "Parade of Flowers," raised thousands of dollars for the church.

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Events such as Womanless Weddings & Tom Thumb Weddings were popular sources of entertainment for the community and were performed at Old St. Mark AME Church (Byrne, 2021). These events represent not only the church's religious role, but also the critical social role, within the community.

Group II: Architectural Significance:

Eleven (11) total criteria - if qualifying under this group alone, at least five (5) criteria must be met. The Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site meets (5) criteria:

- 1) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) **clearly dominates or is strongly identified with a street scene or the urban landscape.**

Old St. Mark AME Church occupies .2296 acres on the corner of James P. Brawley Drive (formerly Chestnut Street) and Cameron M. Alexander Blvd. NW (formerly Kennedy Avenue). Being the only building constructed of Stone Mountain granite within the neighborhood, as well as the size and style of the building, makes Old St. Mark AME Church a unique, dominant visual feature of the English Avenue neighborhood and the prominent Brawley Drive/Alexander Boulevard intersection within it. At the time of its construction and still today, Old St. Mark AME is one of the largest, non-educational, non-residential structures in the neighborhood.

- 2) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) **is the work of an exceptionally important master architect or builder.**

Architect Charles H. Hopson was employed to design the then new (1920) Western Heights Baptist facility – the same structure that exists today. Charles Hopson was an English-born architect whose work in Atlanta reflected a variety of styles and adaptations. While his designs were typically all different, they were all in general English-derived, which makes this church design unique as it is not English-derived. Hopson designed churches in Nova Scotia, post offices for the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington D.C. and multiple buildings in Selma, Alabama before coming to Atlanta. Hopson came to Atlanta around 1914 and remained until he passed away in 1941. Among other building types, Hopson was the architect for several exceptional houses of worship within the Atlanta area such as Ponce de Leon Methodist Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Rock Spring Presbyterian Church, and Peachtree Road Presbyterian Church – all of which follow Hopson's English-derived architectural style. Hopson also designed private residences and public buildings; however, churches were known to be his specialty.

- 4) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) **is an example of a style that is extremely rare in the City of Atlanta.**
- 5) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) **is an example of an exceptionally fine unique style or building type.**

Old St. Mark AME Church is a unique example of a vernacular interpretation of the Mission Revival architectural style. Mission Revival's identifying features typically include: "mission shaped dormers or roof parapet; commonly with red tile roof covering; wide overhanging eaves, usually open; porch roofs supported by large, square piers, commonly arched above; wall surfaces usually smooth stucco." Elements of Mission Revival that are present on Old St. Mark AME Church include: rectangular in plan; a symmetrical front (west) facade with entrances flanked by large, square pilasters; arched windows and doors on the east façade, as well as the stepped and angled roof parapet on the front (west) facade. Further, widely spaced dentils emulate open eaves, typical of the Mission Revival style. However, significant decorative detailing is absent (which would also be typical of the Mission Revival style) given the only detail of note exists along the coping at the cornice line.

Although extremely rare, a few Mission Revival style buildings can be seen clad in stone. Further, knowing the architect typically designed churches in an English-derived style, the use of "patterned," rough-hewn granite wall cladding as the principal material with cast stone trim on sills and belt course at the basement to ground floor level is further evidence of the vernacular interpretation of the Mission Revival style. All windows have stone lintels and entrances have stone lintels with keystones over the entrances. As such, the church's cladding of Stone Mountain granite is a vernacular interpretation of the style by use of locally sourced materials and relates to regional architecture that utilizes the same material.

Taken together, the marriage of these elements creates a vernacular and unique example of the rare Mission Revival style in a religious structure within the Atlanta area.

- 8) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) **is associated with an exceptionally significant technology or method of construction**, including the use of materials in a significant way.

Constructed of Stone Mountain granite that was fitted together by hand like a puzzle with beaded mortar joints, Old St. Mark AME Church is the only structure in the English Avenue neighborhood that was constructed using these materials in this manner. The entire building was built using the granite, including the foundation and all exterior walls, creating a unique physical and visual texture. Old St. Mark AME Church is one of approximately eight structures, and one of approximately three structures that was established as a religious facility, constructed of Stone Mountain granite in Vine City, English Avenue and Washington Park. Approximately forty noteworthy buildings and landmarks in and around the Atlanta Metro area are constructed of Stone Mountain granite, such as the Georgia State Capitol Building and the Dekalb County Courthouse (Byrne). Stone Mountain granite was extracted from Stone Mountain, located just outside of the City of Atlanta. Following the Great Fire of 1917,

architects, builders, and city planners began looking for fireproof materials, such as granite. Stone Mountain's close location to Atlanta made it a viable and easily accessible source for granite (Byrne, 2017). Further, it is notable the combined effect of the local Stone Mountain granite as a fireproof building methodology used in a load bearing structural manner.

Like many neighborhoods in the City of Atlanta, transportation was fundamental to the neighborhood's expansion and development. The primary mode of transportation during the time Western Heights Baptist Church was constructed was Atlanta's extensive streetcar system. From the 1880's, Kennedy Avenue had one of the main lines for the streetcar system with a stop located on the corner of Kennedy Street and Chestnut Street, directly outside of the church. The English Avenue community was the only community in Atlanta at that time that had a streetcar line that ran straight through the center of the community. This connection allowed people from all over the city, and by extension the state, to come together to worship and participate in social activities together. This transportation connection also allowed stone masons from various locations throughout the state of Georgia to assist in the construction of Western Heights Baptist Church.

11) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) is a building or site whose original site orientation is maintained.

Old St. Mark AME Church's original site orientation, with its main entrance facing west to James P. Brawley Drive NW and its minimal setbacks from the street, have been maintained. The structure has not been reoriented or moved from its original location at the southeast corner of James P. Brawley Drive NW and Cameron P. Alexander Blvd. NW. Old St Mark AME remains a prominent element of this intersection and is visible from both streets farther from the site.

Group III: Cultural Significance:

Three (3) total criteria - if qualifying under this group alone, at least one (1) criterion must be met as well as least three (3) criteria from Groups I and II. The Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site meets (1) criteria:

2) Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) that by its location is broadly known or recognized by residents throughout a neighborhood.

Old St. Mark AME Church is a site that is broadly known and recognized by neighborhood and other nearby residents as it has served as a focus of activity, a gathering spot, and a specific point of reference in the urban fabric of the city, primarily as a house of worship, beginning in 1920 as Western Heights Baptist Church. Western Heights Baptist Church occupied the building until 1940 when they relocated to their current home in LaGrange, Georgia. The building sat vacant until St. Mark AME Church took up residency in 1948.

Once the congregation of St. Mark AME Church moved into the facility, it quickly grew to be one of the largest AME churches in Atlanta. Notable persons such as former Georgia governor

and US President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter's mother, Lillian Gordy Carter, Honorable Governor Herman Talmadge, and Honorable Mayor Maynard Jackson spoke to the congregation at St. Mark AME Church. Like Western Heights Baptist, St. Mark AME was a social and religious center for the community. There were roller skating parties, choirs, musicians, various competitions, a Sunday school and a youth ministry, as well as the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and Brownies all held meetings there. In addition to being a place for religious and social gatherings, St. Mark AME Church hosted an array of fundraisers and events for the church and community (St. Mark AME, Our History). The church has always been a focal point and gathering spot of the community it served, representing the church's critical cultural and social roles within the community, for both the earlier white congregation and the later African-American congregation.

Due to the growth of the congregation and the lack of parking, the congregation made the decision to look for a new home that could better suit their needs. In 1976, St. Mark AME Church found a new home at 3605 Campbellton Road in the former Ben Hill Baptist Church. The congregation noted that the decision to leave the area was a difficult one, but costs to develop and build in the area were not feasible at the time. The building sat vacant until Pastor Winston Taylor purchased the property in 1995.

2. MINIMUM FINDINGS

The Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) meets the specific criteria referenced in Section #1 of this report ("Eligibility Criteria"). Further, as more fully described in this Designation Report, the Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) also meets the "minimum criteria" for a Landmark Building / Site (LBS) as set out in Section 16-20.004(b)(1) of the Code of Ordinances of the City as follows:

Section 16-20.004(b)(1):

The Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site possesses an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, even when considering the cumulative physical changes that occurred during the entire period of significance of 1920-1976. Though today the property is now a "site" with a structure, the elements of integrity mentioned above are still very prevalent today, as follows:

- The physical location and setting of the church have not changed substantively, and the material and workmanship of the Stone Mountain granite are as intact today as they were when the original building was built in 1920.
- The overall architectural design of the church has not been altered. Even though the roof and windows are no longer in place, their original architectural expression can still be visually understood and are still a strong component of the composition, patterns, and proportions of the design.
- Lastly, the feelings and associations connected to the church are still very present today. In particular, the site still stands as a visual and cultural icon in the neighborhood and clearly represents a time period when churches were one of primary, central places for social / community interactions. Even today as a site, the church structure still brings people together

in community to learn about the evolution of the neighborhood, to hold special events, and connect with history.

Section 16-20.004(b)(1)(a) – (c):

- a. **Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history** for its association with the shifting racial patterns, otherwise known as "White Flight," that took place throughout the country, and more specifically within the Atlanta neighborhoods of English Avenue and Vine City; and
- c. **Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building / Site (LBS) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, and represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic values, and represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction** being a unique example of a vernacular interpretation of the Mission Revival style by noted architect Charles Hopson and its association with the use of local Stone Mountain granite as a fireproof building methodology in a load bearing structural manner. Further, Old St. Mark AME Church is one of approximately eight structures, and one of approximately three structures that was established as a religious facility, constructed of Stone Mountain granite in the areas of Vine City, English Avenue and Washington Park.

3. NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT AND HISTORY

Purchased in its entirety in 1891 by the son of former mayor, John W. English, the English Avenue neighborhood was designed to be a working class, white neighborhood for those who had moved to Atlanta from rural areas to get jobs in the new mills and factories in the city's west side (APC). Lying directly to the south is the Vine City neighborhood, which was at that time predominantly an African-American neighborhood. Simpson Road, now known as Joseph E Boone Blvd NW, provided the racial divide between these neighborhoods, however some areas were racially blended (Bashel, Georgia Tech). Today's English Avenue area was known at different times as Bellwood and Western Heights, hence the original church's name.

Old St. Mark AME Church is located on the southeast corner of James P Brawley Drive NW (to the west) and Cameron P Alexander Blvd. NW (to the north), situated directly in the middle of the English Avenue neighborhood, and lies north of Vine City. Old St. Mark AME Church is well integrated into the historic fabric of the English Avenue, Vine City, and Washington Park neighborhoods due to its evolving use as a place of worship, center for community and educational activities, and location of social gatherings.

The adjacent Vine City neighborhood has a rich history and is closely tied to the English Avenue Elementary School (near Old St. Mark AME Church) and the historic African-American colleges due to its location next to English Avenue and the now Atlanta University Center campus

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(respectively), which were integral to Vine City becoming a vibrant and prosperous African-American neighborhood. Established in the late 1800's and named after Vine Street, the neighborhood is bounded by Joseph E. Boone Blvd NW to the north, Joseph E. Lowery Blvd. NW to the west, Northside Drive NW to the east, and MLK Jr. Drive NW to the south. Following the Atlanta Massacre of 1906, also known as the Race Riots of 1906, African-Americans began to move their businesses east to what is now known as the "Old Fourth Ward" and "Sweet Auburn" or to the west in and around Vine City, and closer to already established influential Black churches in the area. The Great Atlanta Fire of 1917 left over 10,000 people homeless in the city, including residents of Vine City, prompting a migration of African-Americans north into the English Avenue neighborhood, much to the dismay of the white residents living there.

Tensions arose and as a result, churches sold their buildings, including eventually Western Heights Baptist Church which changed hands to become St. Mark AME Church. In 1941, along the eastern edge of the neighborhood, the Atlanta Housing Authority built Herndon and Eagon Homes as segregated public housing complexes for African-Americans. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, many white residents abandoned neighborhoods entirely, likely under the urgency of "blockbusting," in a movement later known nationally as "White Flight." The area evolved to become a prosperous and thriving African-American neighborhood and home to affluent African American Atlantans, such as civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and Julian Bond, who resided in Vine City (Johnson, Rodney Cook Sr. Park Org.). As an example of that prosperity, African American millionaire Alonzo F. Herndon purchased land in southern Vine City and had his Georgia Revival home built there (Atlanta Public Schools-Forgotten Treasures).

During the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans led sit-ins, boycotts, and peaceful demonstrations in Atlanta to protest segregation and racist Jim Crow laws as part of the larger Civil Rights Movement. On December 13, 1960, the English Avenue Elementary School was bombed, months before city-wide school integration. Several Atlanta newspapers speculated that the bombers were white people expressing anger and bitterness towards the school's conversion from a white to a black facility. The bombing may also have been connected to an anti-segregation march that had occurred that Sunday afternoon. Mayor William Hartsfield brought in the Federal Bureau of Investigation to find the bombers, however no charges were issued. African-American English Avenue residents believed that the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was responsible. The English Avenue School bombing illustrates the high racial tensions in Atlanta, a center of Civil Rights activity at that time.

By the late 1960's, the area had already seen decades of various "urban renewal" programs and the related "gentrification" of African American neighborhoods. The introduction of the interstate system and large entertainment venues furthered the decline of English Avenue and Vine City, as did the continued suburbanization trend. By the 1970's both Vine City and English Avenue neighborhoods descended into poverty with a high rate of drug-related crimes. The area became filled with abandoned, shuttered houses that were falling into disrepair. Herndon and Eagon Homes (Atlanta Housing Authority public housing communities) suffered as drugs and crime heightened (Moore). More recently, both public housing communities were demolished in the 2000's and were replaced with mixed use communities. Mercedes Benz Stadium was erected

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in 2014 (replacing the Georgia Dome), continuing the effects on the neighborhood of a large sports venue, much to the dismay of some neighborhood residents.

Today, Vine City continues to physically change, including older homes being torn down to make way for newly constructed single-family houses, mixed use buildings and wider roadways at the northern and eastern perimeter (Tennant et al.). On the opposite end of the spectrum, the English Avenue neighborhood remains largely underpopulated, with approximately 44% of the homes vacant and two-thirds of the residents living below the federal poverty line, according to the nonprofit group, Friends of English Avenue.

In 2015, surveys were conducted by another nonprofit group, Park Pride Atlanta, as a part of a visioning plan to create activated green spaces within the neighborhood's empty lots (Bashel, Georgia Tech). In November 2020, the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park was opened to provide a safe place for neighborhood kids to play and the community to hold gatherings. The park provides additional amenities that were specifically identified by the community through Park Pride's park visioning process.

In 2017, the Westside Land Use Framework Plan was developed by the community in partnership with the City's Department of Planning and Community Development (now the Department of City Planning) and adopted by the City of Atlanta to guide future development. The plan proposed changes to several Westside neighborhoods including Vine City and English Avenue, satisfying both the city and community's desires concerning connectivity to downtown, zoning, and historic preservation. Old St. Mark AME Church was one of three locations in English Avenue that was proposed for retail development (Land Use Framework Plan, page 66).

More recently, National Football League Atlanta Falcons owner, Arthur Blank, committed to donating \$30 million to the revitalization of the English Avenue and Vine City neighborhoods. For example, the restoration of the Mattie Freeland House into a community center was paid for by Arthur Blank. Mattie Freeland was a dedicated and respected English Avenue resident who was known for her involvement within the community who passed away in 2007. The acquisition and restoration of her home into a community center was a vital step in the Vision Plan by Park Pride Atlanta as well as the Land Use Framework Plan. Other areas that have seen improvements in recent years are Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park (2019), and plans are currently underway (2020) to rehabilitate the English Avenue School, creating a community center focused on growth and safety in the English Avenue area (Peters, 2021). Vine City's location near downtown, the MARTA system, Atlanta University Center and Georgia Institute of Technology lends the area to further revitalization through organizations such as the National Monuments Foundation and the City of Atlanta. For example, the 16-acre City of Atlanta Rodney Cook Sr. Park (which contains work by the National Monuments Foundation) opened in 2021 (Peters).

To the southwest of English Avenue and directly to the west of Vine City lies Washington Park. Established in 1906, Washington Park was the first neighborhood designed specifically for African-Americans on undeveloped and abandoned plats. African-American businessman and developer Heman Perry was responsible for the design of Washington Park (1919-1924). A main

feature was a 25-acre park for African-Americans since there were no recreational parks in Atlanta for their use. The park, also named Washington Park, was home to a dance hall, swimming pools, a pavilion, and tennis courts. Originally designed only for the residents of Washington Park, the park became so popular that African-Americans would travel from all over the state of Georgia, and consequently overcrowding became an issue (*The Conservancy at Washington Park*). The development of the Washington Park area has significant ties to racism as well. Ashby Street divided whites from African-Americans, with whites residing to the west and African-Americans residing to the east. While Washington Park (both the park and the neighborhood) has seen changes due to the construction of the main east-west MARTA line, a MARTA station and the removal of some of its historic structures, it has maintained its overall historic integrity through its many remaining historic homes and setting. (*The Conservancy at Washington Park*).

4. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

Overall and Interior

Old St. Mark AME Church is a two-story structure constructed of gray Stone Mountain granite that was fitted together by hand like a puzzle with beaded mortar joints. The building slopes with the site and is 37'-6" at the front (west) facade and is 44'-6" at the rear (east) facade. The walls are over 1'-0" thick and stone wall caps have been set in place on all walls. All original window openings remain, though few frames and sashes remain. Some window openings (all of which maintain their original size, except as noted below) have been covered with plywood. The original windows and frames that are no longer in place, have not been replaced and the openings have been left open. Remnants of the original stained glass exist on the ground on the inside of the church structure. Stained glass was only located on the front (west) facade windows, with clear glass in all other windows. All exterior entrance doors have been replaced with locally sourced, handmade wooden doors.

The roof and the interior of the church were completely removed due to major structural and water damage and have not been replaced. The interior of the perimeter / exterior walls shows evidence of the timber beams that once designated a basement level, a slightly raised main floor (in relation to the outside, sidewalk level), and a balcony above the main level. The basement level was originally finished for classrooms in 1930, but today is partially infilled with earth to support the current open-air use of the space. The concrete foundation for the baptismal pool remains in the middle of the rear (east) wall.

Although the interior elements of the building no longer remain and the roof was removed, Old St. Mark AME Church is still recognizable as a house of worship.

Front (west) Façade

The front façade, which faces James B. Brawley Drive, is divided into three sections. The central mass features a stepped parapet and engaged pilasters flanking each entrance. The structure is accessed by two entrances. Each entrance has six concrete steps flanked by two granite cheek

walls, each with a concrete cap. Two sets of symmetrical double, handmade, wooden doors are located at the top of the concrete steps. The current doors are derived from the original door design and the original door hardware has been cleaned and installed on these new doors. The side masses have a flat parapet wall with a central, flat-headed window with stone head lintel and central keystone. Two cornerstones are located on the northwest facade, a marble stone from St. Mark AME's original building (at its previous location) and the polished granite stone listing trustee names from May 1969. The central mass has a single window centered over each entrance, and five windows stacked on both the first and second floors. There are fourteen windows total on this facade. All windows on this facade have a flat head, with stone head lintel and central keystone. A stone band separates the first floor and the foundation levels.

Left (north) Facade

Moving from west to east, the building slopes with the site along Cameron Alexander Boulevard. The first bay slightly projects and contains a central window. The remainder of the facade contains nine stacked windows, eight of which are paired, on both the first and second levels. There is now one large set of asymmetrical double wooden doors that face the street. These doors were created by removing two paired windows at the first-floor level (as well as possibly two windows from the basement level) and the surrounding stone. The stone head lintels are still in place signifying the location of the original window openings at the first-floor level. The basement level retains three smaller windows, slightly offset to the window bays above. As such, in total there are nineteen windows remaining on this facade. All windows on this facade have a flat head, with stone head lintel with a central keystone. A stone band separates the first floor and the basement levels.

Rear (east) Facade

The rear (east) facade emulates the front (west) facade in that there is a central mass with a side mass on each side, however this facade is three stories in height. The central mass features a parapet with a stone chimney projected above. All the window and door openings are located within the central mass. This facade contains five stacked bays, fifteen openings total. The basement level has three, flat-headed door openings flanked by segmented arch window openings. The door openings have an operable wooden door to the left (south) with two inoperable, plywood covered door openings adjacent. The first floor has five segmented arch windows, and the second floor has five arched window openings stacked.

Right (south) Facade

Moving from west to east, the building slopes with the site. The first bay slightly projects and contains a central window. The remainder of the facade contains nine stacked windows, eight of which are paired, on both the first and second levels. No doors exist on this facade. The basement level retains five smaller windows, slightly offset to the window bays above. In total, there are nineteen windows remaining on this facade. All windows on this facade have a flat head, with stone head lintel and a central keystone. A stone band separates the first floor and the basement levels.

5. PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance is from 1920 to 1976, from when the building was originally constructed through the time the building was intact and in active use as a religious facility.

Western Heights Baptist Church was organized on July 10th, 1904, as Western Heights Christian Mission. At the corner of Kennedy and Chestnut Streets (now Cameron M. Alexander Blvd. and James P. Brawley Dr. NW, respectively), the then new Western Heights Baptist Church opened on Thanksgiving Day in 1920 and the present structure is what remains of that building. Western Heights Baptist occupied the structure until 1940. St. Mark AME Church moved their congregation to the structure in 1948 and remained there until 1976. The building remained vacant until 1995 when the property was purchased by its current owner, Pastor Winston Taylor.

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Tennant, Tyler, et al. "Terror in the City Too Busy to Hate: How the English Avenue School Bombing Challenged Atlanta's Popular Myth of Racial Progress." *Atlanta Studies*, ATLS, 22 June 2021, www.atlantastudies.org/2020/12/12/terror-in-the-city-too-busy-to-hate-how-the-english-avenue-school-bombing-challenged-atlantas-popular-myth-of-racial-progress/.

Thomas Jr., Kenneth H., "Rock Spring Presbyterian Church," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), Section 8.

7. CONTRIBUTING / NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

The Contributing structure and landscape resources of the proposed Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) include the walls of the main structure and its original Baptismal font on the interior, the entrance steps and knee walls along James P. Brawley Drive (the front façade of the structure), and the garden beds flanking the main entrances between the structure and the public sidewalk along James P. Brawley Drive on the west.

Non-contributing structures / elements include the greenscape inside the four walls of the structure and the public sidewalk abutting the property on James P. Brawley Drive and Cameron M. Alexander Boulevard, both maintained by the City of Atlanta.

8. POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

The following city, state and federal economic incentives may apply to the proposed Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site, as well as the potential for a private conservation easement:

Landmark Historic Property Tax Abatement Program

The owner of an income-producing building, which is listed on the National or Georgia Register of Historic Places, has been designated by the City as a Landmark Building or a contributing building in a Landmark District, may obtain preferential property tax treatment. The building must be in standard condition. For purposes of tax assessment for City taxes, excluding bonded indebtedness, the fair market value of the building and up to two acres of land surrounding it, is frozen for eight years at the level existing at the time of application and certification. In the ninth year, the fair market value is fixed at one-half the difference between the frozen value and the current fair market value. The application for this tax freeze must be filed with the county tax assessor's office by December 31st of the year before the freeze will go into effect.

Federal Income Tax Credit Program/Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC)

A federal income tax credit equal to 20 percent of the project's qualified rehabilitation expenses available for income-producing properties only. All properties must be listed in, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a National Register Historic District. Project work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The application is first reviewed by the Historic Preservation Division (HPD), then forwarded to the National Park Service for review and approval. This program is available nationwide.

State Tax Credit Program/Rehabilitation Tax Credit

The Georgia State Income Tax Credit Program for Rehabilitated Historic Property allows eligible participants to apply for a state income tax credit equaling 25 percent of qualifying rehabilitation expenses capped at \$100,000 for a personal residence, and \$300,000, \$5 million or \$10 million for all other income producing properties.

Charitable Contribution Deduction

The charitable contribution deduction is taken in the form of a conservation easement (Easements Atlanta Inc.) and enables the owner of a “certified historic structure” to receive a one-time tax deduction. A conservation easement ensures the preservation of a building’s facade by restricting the right to alter its appearance. Qualified professionals should be consulted on the matters of easement valuations and the tax consequences of their donation. To be eligible for the charitable contribution deduction, a property must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing building within a historic district. If located in a National Register Historic District, a Part 1 must be submitted to HPD for review and certification by the National Park Service.

9. GENERAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The proposed boundary for Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) located at 491 James P. Brawley Drive NW (aka 762 Cameron M Alexander Boulevard, NW) includes the entirety of the main structure, the west garden beds, and walkways within the following general boundary:

The boundary begins at the northwest corner of the property at the southeast intersection of Cameron M. Alexander Blvd. NW and James P. Brawley Dr. NW, and extends east 100 ft. along the south right-of-way line of Cameron M. Alexander Blvd to the rear (north-south) property line, extends south 100 ft. along the rear (north-south) property line, extends west 100 ft. along the south side (east-west) property line to James P. Brawley Drive, and proceeds north 100 ft. along east right-of-way line of James P. Brawley Drive to the point of beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of James P. Brawley Drive and Cameron M. Alexander Boulevard. As noted here, each side of the property is approximately 100 ft. in length.

10. BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Old St. Mark AME Church Landmark Building/Site (LBS) boundary was selected as it is the boundary of the current property upon which the Landmark Building / Site is located and is documented in the Fulton County Tax Assessor’s real estate records.

11. GENERAL PLAT MAP



12. PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1: Old St. Mark AME west facade-Courtesy of Shannon Byrne/I Am the Mountain, March 2021



Figure 2 (left): Cornerstones located on the northwest corner- Courtesy of Shelly Cervero/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021



Figure 3 (right): Cornice detail on north facade- Courtesy of Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021

ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION



Figures 4 and 5 (top, left and right): Front entrance on north facade- Courtesy of Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021

Figures 6 and 7 (bottom, left and right): Original door hardware on north facade entrances- Courtesy of Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021

ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION



Figure 8: Old St. Mark AME northwest perspective view-Courtesy of Shannon Byrne/I Am the Mountain, March 2021



Figure 9: Old St. Mark AME north facade-Courtesy Shannon Byrne/I Am the Mountain, March 2021

ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION



Figure 10: Original window frame on north facade, partially destroyed-Courtesy of Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021



Figure 11: Old St. Mark AME east facade- Courtesy Shannon Byrne/I Am the Mountain, March 2021

ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION

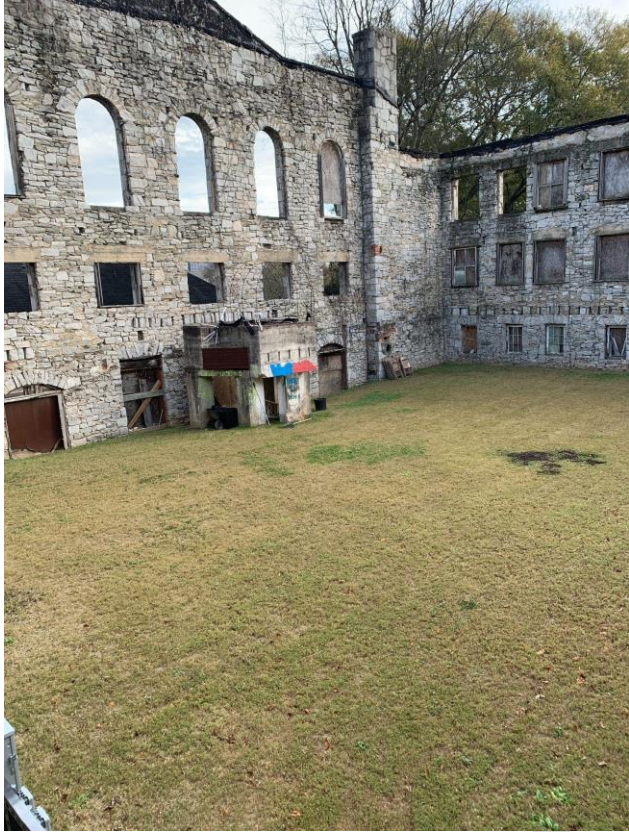


Figure 12 (left): Old St. Mark AME interior east wall featuring baptismal-Courtesy Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021



Figure 13 (right): Close up of baptismal, looking south-Courtesy Greg Jacobs/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021



Figure 14 (above): Old St. Mark AME interior looking southwest- Courtesy Shelly Cervero/Landmark Preservation LLC, 2021

13. EXHIBITS

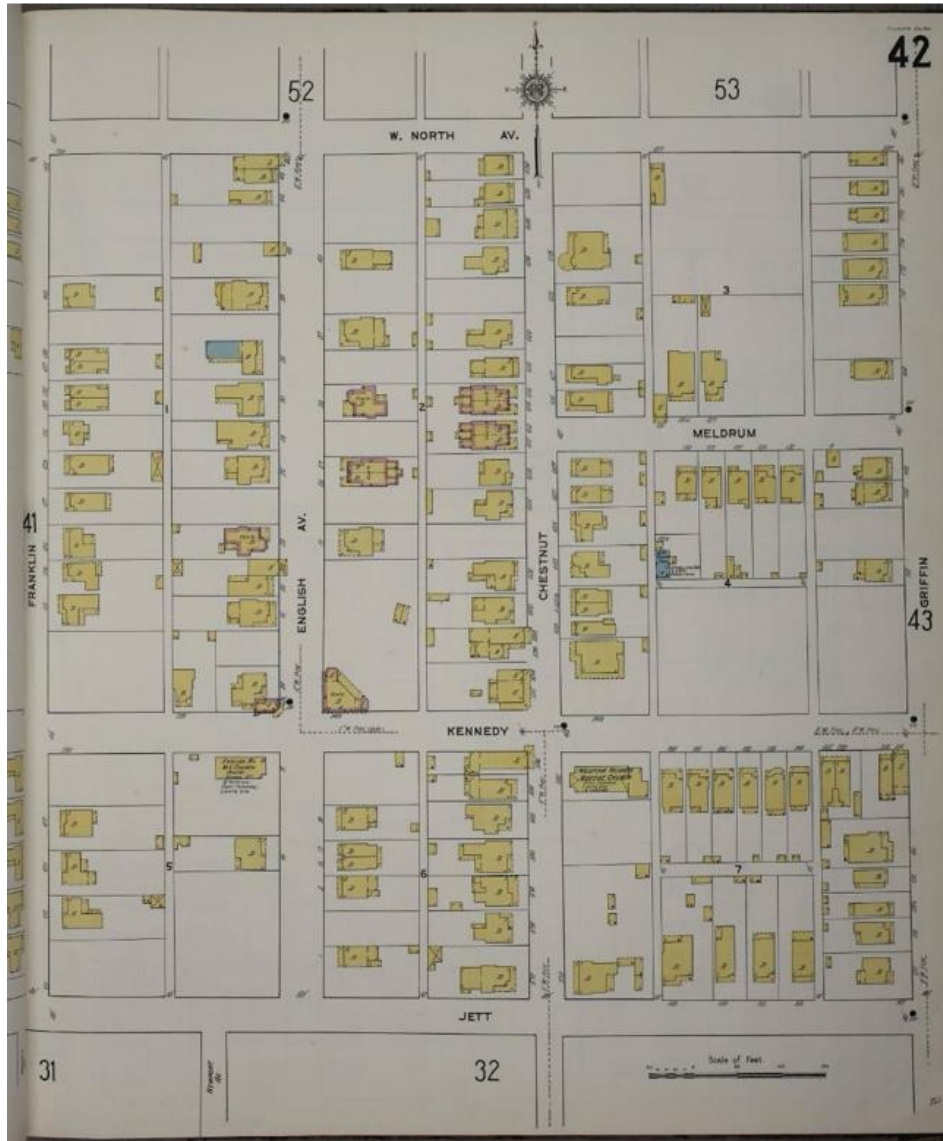
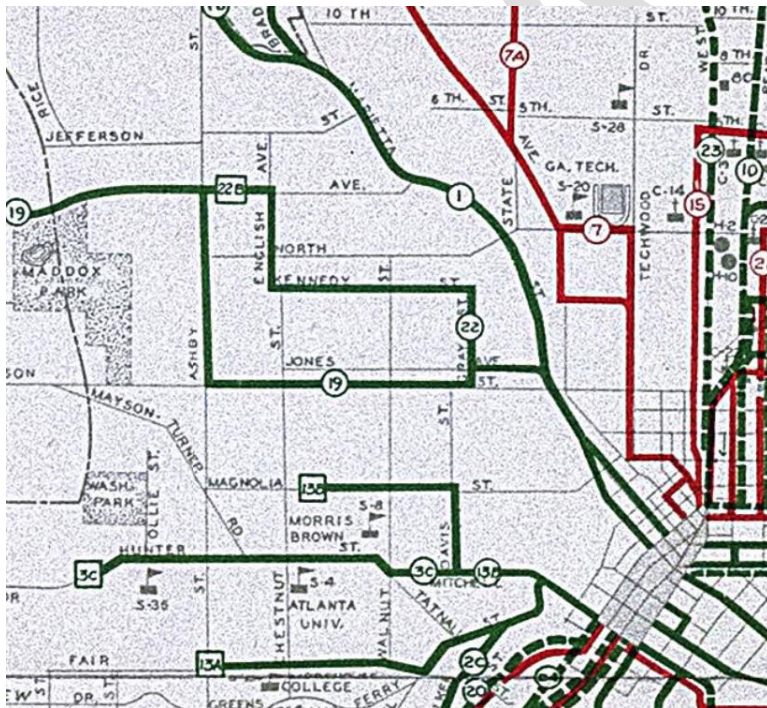


Figure 15: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia. Sanborn Map Company, ; Vol. 1, 1911. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01378_006/.

Note: At the corner of Chestnut and Kennedy Streets lies Western Heights Baptist Church before the current structure was built. No other Sanborn Map was able to be located showing the current structure.

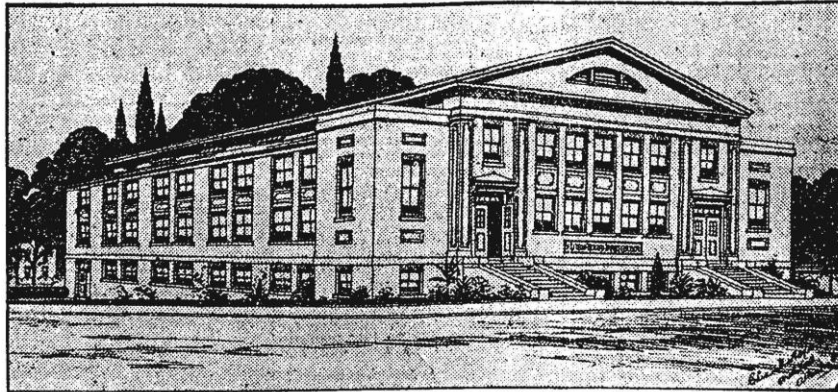
ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION



Figures 16 and 17 (inset below): Transportation Map of Atlanta Showing Street Car - Trackless Trolley and Bus Lines from Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia. Georgia Power Company, 1948. Map.
<https://album.atlantahistorycenter.com/digital/collection/p17222coll5/id/109/rec/74>

Splendid Building Will Soon Be Erected By the Western Heights Baptist Church
The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945); Jul 20, 1919;
 ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution
 pg. 11

Splendid Building Will Soon Be Erected By the Western Heights Baptist Church



New home for Western Heights Baptist Church.

Plans for a splendid church building to be erected on the corner of Kennedy and Chestnut streets by the members of the Western Heights Baptist church and their friends have been completed.

Owing to the large increase in membership since the new pastor, Rev. W. M. Albert took charge, it has been found imperative to find

additional floor space especially for the growing Sunday school.

This church, when completed, will seat 1,450 persons and has been arranged to accommodate a large Sunday school. It will have five departments, and will be one of the largest and best arranged Sunday schools in Georgia. The basement will not be finished at the present time, but is so planned that it may

be used for institutional purposes. This enterprise affords all Baptists an opportunity to rally to the support of the brethren engaged in the work.

Charles H. Hopson, who specializes in church buildings, and who has designed the Ponce de Leon Avenue Methodist church and other churches in this city, is the architect.

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Figure 18: Citation located above at top of image.

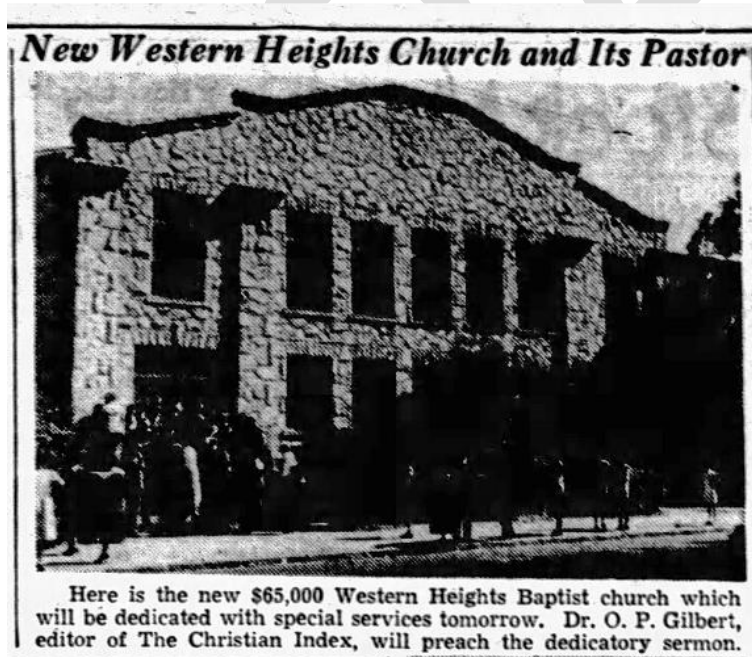


Figure 19: New Western Heights Church and Its Pastor. *The Atlanta Constitution*; November 19, 1938. Courtesy of I Am The Mountain Blog.

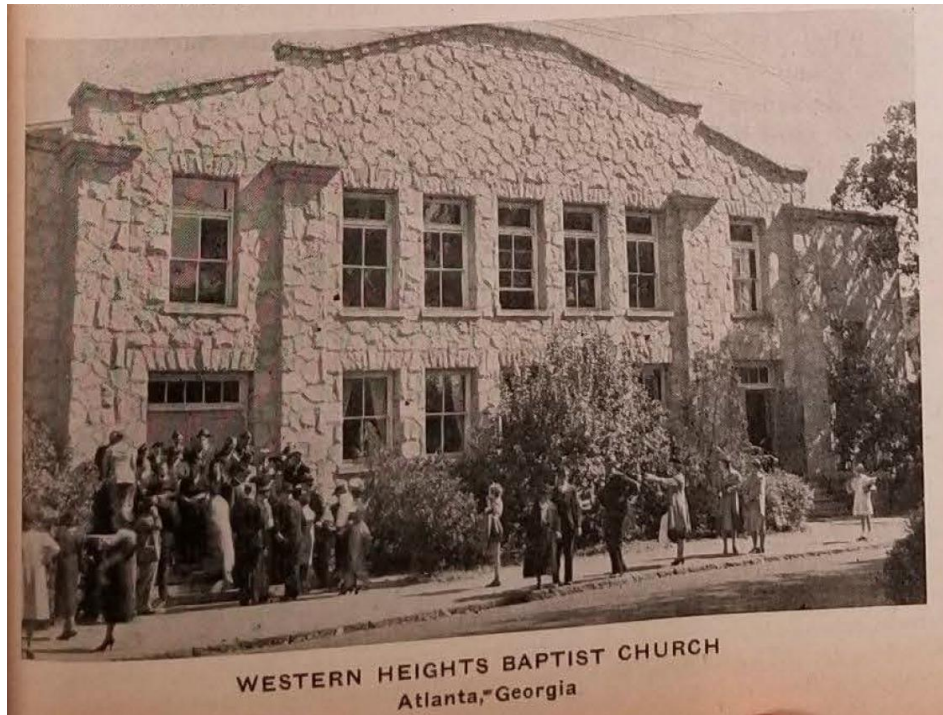


Figure 20: Western Heights Baptist Church. *The Christian Index*; December 8, 1938, page 7. Courtesy of the Mercer University Archives.



Figure 21: Members to Help Erect New Church by Thanksgiving. *The Atlanta Constitution*; September 14, 1920. Courtesy of I Am The Mountain Blog.

ATTACHMENT "A" TO THE NOMINATION RESOLUTION

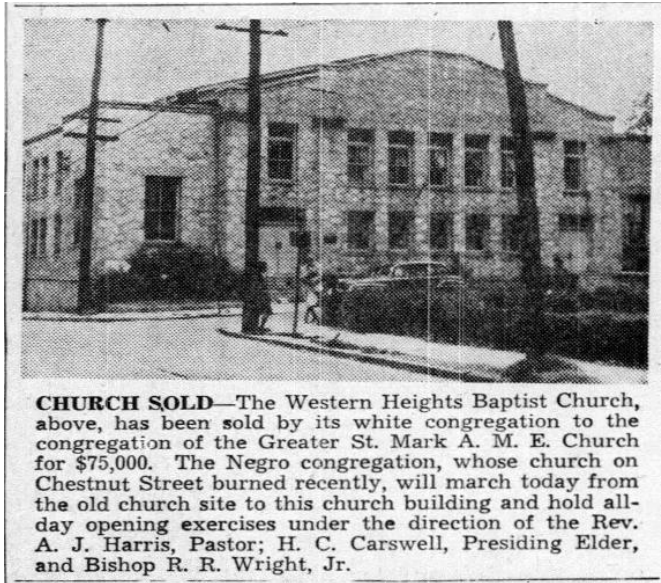


Figure 22: Church Sold. *The Atlanta Constitution*; November 3, 1948. Courtesy of I Am The Mountain Blog.

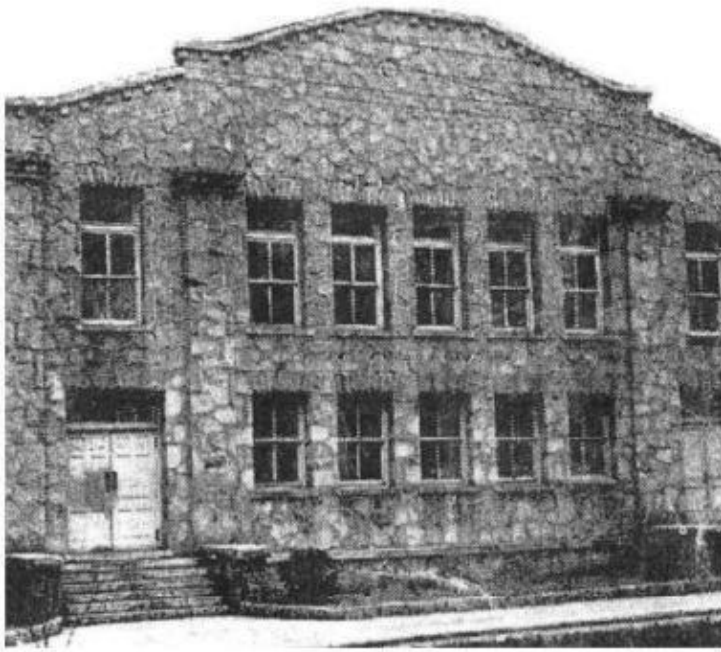


Figure 23: Exterior View. Undated. Found on <https://stmarkameatl.org/our-history>.

FIRE DESTROYS ST. MARK A.M.E. CHURCH BUILDING

Johnson, Robert E.
Atlanta Daily World (1932-2003); Jul 4, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World
 pg. 1



DISASTER STRIKES WESTSIDE: wake of a raging fire which gutted the 63-year-old St. Mark A.M.E. Church, 33 Chestnut St., N. W., Saturday afternoon. Property loss was estimated at \$45,000. No official report was made as to the origin of the fire.—(Scott Photo).

FIRE DESTROYS ST. MARK A.M.E. CHURCH BUILDING

By ROBERT E. JOHNSON

Billowing smoke and tottering walls against a reddened sky brought a casual crowd of several hundred spectators to the scene of West Hunter and Chestnut streets at 12:55 p. m. Saturday, where hungry flames quickly devoured the sun-dry wooden edifice of 63-year-old St. Mark A.M.E. church, at 33 Chestnut St., N. W., and seriously imperiled other homes in the immediate vicinity.

Answering the four-alarm fire, the city firemen sped to the scene of disaster, but when they arrived the raging blaze had rapidly swept through the tower of the church building, causing timber to fall and the rear ceiling structure to collapse near the altar. Six hose lines, with the aid of several civilian bystanders, were used to bring under control the fire which damaged a nearby home.

\$45,000 DAMAGES SEEN
 The property loss, partially covered by insurance, was estimated at \$45,000 by Rev. H. C. Carswell, presiding Elder of the Atlanta District of A.M.E. Churches.

Among the nearby homes endangered by the fire were those of Rev. W. M. Whittlers, pastor of Fayetteville Circuit, 37 Chestnut Street, who

has temporary accommodations at the church.

(Continued On Page 8; Col. 6)

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Fire Destroys

(Continued From Page One)

the home of Rev. Carswell, and the occupants who reside at 39 Chestnut Street.

SOURCES UNKNOWN

No official report was made as to the origin of the fire. Rev. A. J. Harris, pastor of the historic church which was organized in 1885, arrived on the scene shortly after the blaze started. While many curbside observers sympathized with the pastor and his 500 members, he looked on with mixed emotions as the firemen struggled to extinguish the flames. He lamented the fact that \$2700 had been used recently to defray the cost of a renovation program which included the construction of a church annex, choir stand, pastor's study, ladies lounge, rest room and kitchenette.

"We had just finished painting and installing new lights," said Rev. Harris, who has been pastor of the church for 18 months. With a flickering smile, he recalled a money-saving premonition. "I was getting ready to go downtown to get two electric fans and 50 chairs," he opined, "when something told me 'don't you go,' and I told Rev. Carswell that I wouldn't make the trip."

News of the fire reached the pastor three hours after his premonition while he was at his parsonage, 761 Chestnut Street.

WORSHIP AT M. B. COLLEGE

Later commenting on the future worship services for his congregation, Rev. Harris told the press that all services will be held at Morris Brown College Chapel, which has been made available by President W. A. Fountain.

The 27th Anniversary of Choir No. 1, slated for Tuesday night, July 6, will be held at the Morris Brown Chapel, the pastor announced, and urges all participants to note the change of schedule.

No plans have been made for rebuilding the church which was rebuilt in 1937-38, ten years after being organized in 1885.

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Figures 24 (left) and 25 (right): Fire Destroys Old St. Mark A.M.E. Church Building. *The Atlanta Daily World*, July 4, 1948.

Beautiful St. Mark To Conduct Opening Sunday

*Atlanta Daily World (1932-2003); Oct 2, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World
pg. 3*

Beautiful St. Mark To Conduct Opening Sunday

Plans are completed for the mammoth opening exercises of the new St. Mark AME Church here tomorrow morning, beginning at 10 o'clock promptly. The new \$75,000 church, located at the corners of Chestnut and Kennedy Streets,

replaces the old St. Mark Church.

Presiding Elder H. C. Carswell and Pastor H. J. Harris have worked out a most interesting and informative program for the large throngs who will witness the grand opening. Bishop R. R. Wright, Episcopal head of Georgia AME's, will be on hand at 9:30 at the Old St. Mark, from which point he and Mrs. R. R. Wright will lead the grand march of ministers, members and visitors over to the new church. Bishop and Mrs. Wright arrived in the city late Friday evening for the special opening exercises.

Rev. Harris stated in Atlanta Friday that those friends of the church who plan to attend the opening, will take the English Avenue Streetcar and get off in front of the church, Kennedy and Chestnut.

Bishop Wright will deliver the

special opening sermon and will preside over the administration of Holy Communion. He will be assisted by Presiding Elder Carswell. Pastor Harris has also announced special Baptism rites will also be held and that parents are urged to bring their children for this special Baptismal rites.

The new church, variously estimated at between \$200,000 and \$225,000 was purchased outright by the pastor and members of the St. Mark's church for a price considerably less than its original construction value. In beauty and church atmosphere, those who have seen it testify that there is nothing in Atlanta like it among our best and biggest churches.

The Atlanta public is invited to share in this opening.

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Figure 26: Beautiful St. Mark to Conduct Opening Sunday. The Atlanta Daily World, October 2, 1948.